

Reference examples for 2024 applications

Updated November 2023

The UCAS reference examples below have been developed to show the type of information that you could include in each of the sections. This not an exhaustive list and we will add to these materials as appropriate.

We have updated the frequently asked questions section on the new reference approach for 2024. [Please ensure you read the FAQs](#) that accompany each reference section as you use this document.

As with all aspects of the application process, we also suggest you continue speaking to universities and colleges, who will also be providing advice and guidance.

Section 1 examples

[Please also refer to Frequently asked questions for section 1.](#)

Enter a general statement about your school/college/centre.

[The reference template under Centre Management in the Adviser Portal can be used to enter the information once and added to each reference thereafter.]

UCAS College is an open access sixth form institution with a full-time student body of c.2,000. We recruit primarily from the borough's varied comprehensive schools, but also attract students from further afield. Level 3 students undertake 3 A levels or applied general equivalents, together with an enrichment programme. We offer a wide range of BTEC and Cambridge Technical courses at all levels. A number of our university applicants will have enrolled on Level 2 programmes with us before embarking on study at Level 3. We base predicted grades on end of first year exams where available, alongside internal assessments and a range of other work students have completed.

The Sixth Form College has more than 2,000 students from various feeder schools set in Cheltenham with a range of A level and vocational courses on offer. It is worth noting the Access course at the college is validated and moderated by Acsentis Access Validating Agency and is recognised by QAA. There is no overall Diploma grade. To achieve the Diploma, students' study three subject modules and either a three-credit unit in maths or academic writing to attain 60 credits, 15 of which are not graded, 45 are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction grade. A Pass indicates that a student has achieved all the learning outcomes and is well suited to undergraduate work.

UCAS School is a state selective grammar school with a coeducational sixth form of nearly 400 students. Around a half of our sixth formers join us from a range of non-selective schools in the area. The school offers A level programmes of study in 22 subjects. Entry requirements are currently 48 points from eight GCSE subjects (including English Language and Maths).

Most students study three A levels together with the Extended Project or Core Maths qualification which is taken in Year 12. A number will opt to take four, particularly talented mathematicians who study Further Maths either to AS or to full A level.

Students sit rigorous internal assessments at the end of Year 12; this data, together with students' performance throughout the year, is used to formulate the predicted grades.

The UCAS Sixth Form in XX serves a diverse community where deprivation is surprisingly high. This is exemplified by the fact that the school is in one of the 10% most deprived areas of XX; it also falls into the first POLAR3 quintile and has 22% of students declaring FSM eligibility. In January 20XX Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in XX) declared that the school required significant improvement; this category applied to the school until July 20XX.

The school offers a mix of A levels, BTEC, and Welsh Bacculaureate qualifications. Predicted grades have been generated from a holistic overview of performance and end of year assessment.

UCAS School and Sixth Form Centre is a large, comprehensive, and inclusive academy. Typically, students take three A levels or combine A level study with a BTEC course. The EPQ and Core Maths qualifications are additional options open to all students. This is one of the poorest wards in the XX region. 40% of students qualify for pupil premium and many are the first in their family to apply for university.

Internal exams and assessments sat in Y13 are used to inform predicted grades. Students end of term exams results in Year 12 are used to base predicted grades for October deadline courses.

UCAS High School is a small, rural, comprehensive school on the edge of the XX. It is in an area affected by coastal deprivation, and poor access to further and higher education. The school offers a range of higher qualifications – 25 different subjects, however, ten of these are delivered through multi-level classes alongside National 5 students.

Students can study a number of Advanced Highers. In our setting this may mean they are in a bi-level class with Higher students, or they may receive just three taught periods a week, unlike bigger schools where there is a more comprehensive taught offer. The onus is on students to work independently and organise their study time effectively.

The UCAS School is a community comprehensive school for boys, with approximately 1,077 students on roll of which 150 students are in Post 16 education. Approximately one third of the students in the school have SEND and the number of students entitled to FSM is well above the national average. At post-16, we offer a range of subjects at A level in addition to a number of

vocational courses. Most students study three subjects at Level 3 with only a very small minority being allowed to study four subjects

Agent UCAS helps students from around the world achieve their ambition of studying overseas at university. We support international students to apply for entry to an undergraduate or graduate degree program, and work with universities to create unique preparation programs designed for those students who don't yet meet the university's requirements. Our undergraduate and postgraduate pathway programs support students in improving their English and developing their subject-specific academic knowledge. With our support, we'll help to ensure students comfortably settle into life in a new country and are ready to succeed.

Section 2 examples

[Please also refer to Frequently asked questions for section 2.](#)

Enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement.

Aya has shown true resilience, having made significant progress with her performance during the start of year 13. Aya has had significant mental health challenges, which resulted in hospitalisation, and the loss of the equivalent of 6 weeks of learning during the first year of her studies. Despite this, Aya has been focused to catch up, voluntarily attending some year 12 classes to support this. This has been reflected in her academic progress, with all her teachers highlighting that her significant effort is resulting in rapid assessment improvement across all her subjects.

Shreya lives with some complex health issue, as a result of type 1 diabetes, but this does not hold her back. There have been times when she has faced periods of absence due to illness. Her approach to managing her health needs has ensured that during these periods she has communicated appropriately and always completed her work to a high standard. Shreya is also dyslexic and once again has demonstrated coping mechanisms that mean she achieves to a high standard every time.

Yara enrolled at xx college in 2019 to study PE, Psychology and Biology. However halfway through the course Yara decided to change her career direction after further developing her interest in both playing and coaching sport. She completed the first year of her studies successfully, which demonstrates her determination to succeed, and this year transferred to the Foundation Diploma in Sport Coaching and Development.

Ross moved sixth form centre having spent the previous five years at one of our feeder schools. Transitioning to a new environment represented a challenge for Ross and he took longer to adjust than his peers. He and our pastoral team worked very closely together during the first two terms to ensure that Ross developed the skills and confidence needed to succeed. He has expressed some anxiety about transitioning into another new learning environment and we would recommend a proactive approach from Ross's future tutors in offering access to support materials

Joyah's attainment profile reflects some disruption in her personal life, with her family circumstances meaning that she moved house twice in Year 11. National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 results reflect her hardworking nature, and we believe they are a more accurate representation of her capability and potential than the exams taken previously. Life is becoming more stable, and this is reflected in an upturn in her work; she is now on track to return to her higher levels of attainment

Chao achieved a handful of grade 8 results in his GCSEs but do not accurately reflect the grades he is now on track to achieve. Significant change in attitude saw him achieve high results in his internal assessments. He has approached his Level 3 studies with a greater degree of maturity, and we have confidence that the predictions are accurate.

Jordan was diagnosed with macular dystrophy known as Best Disease, an eye disorder that can cause worsening (progressive) vision loss for which there is no treatment and is registered as visually impaired. It has been a life-changing diagnosis. We ensured Jordan sat at the front of the class, all lectures printed off in A3 handouts or given as PowerPoint (to his personal iPad) as he is unable to read the board.

Section 3 examples

[Please also refer to Frequently asked questions for section 3.](#)

Outline any supportive information specific to the applicant and relevant to the course(s) applied for that you think universities/colleges should be aware of, or how they can support the applicant.

Outside of school, Munroe takes on significant responsibilities within his family by supporting his mum in caring for his three young siblings. It's to his credit that he does this, but early in his National 5 studies it did create pressure when he had competing deadlines for internally assessed work. He has been very open with us about balancing his home life and studies and we have been delighted to support him with flexibility on deadlines.

Throughout the course Jasmin completed weekly placements; she has gained experience in a variety of settings including a Day nursery and Primary school and our Forest School within the grounds. Jasmin has been able to apply her understanding of attachment theory to build relationships and has demonstrated the ability to observe children then plan activities to promote learning opportunities. This year Jasmin is beginning to take this forward to be able to assess for learning and development and to then plan for next steps.

Isaac is a competent and enthusiastic scientist, particularly adept at applying his knowledge and problem-solving skills to complete practical aspects of chemistry, carrying out both quantitative and qualitative practical tasks with skill and without the need of supervision. He independently developed his practical skills, enabling him to complete tasks outside the specification, making successful links from practical lessons to theory.

Malik is a keen geographer, always contributing to class discussions with enthusiasm. He has developed data handling skills including the use of unseen texts, maps, graphs, photographs and numerical data sources. When faced with new concepts he has the ability to apply previously

learnt knowledge in his explanations. He has a particular interest in coastal systems and their role shaping the UK, allowing him to recognise the importance of how anthropogenic activities are having an impact on our planet.

Talia has a great interest in cricket and has approached the sport course with a genuine desire to learn, demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of the interrelationships between the different body systems and sport performance, making connections to her own sporting performance. She has conducted extensive research into careers in the sporting sector and has been able to evaluate her own skills using an audit to then develop a future career pathway.

Chloe has shown an amazing drive and enthusiasm for her aspirations to become a social worker. She has a good understanding of the role and shows the academic skills and abilities to successfully complete her training. She is a strong independent learner able to complete research and writing tasks well with little supervision. She is particularly confident in forming and expressing her own opinions of health and social care issues. Chloe can link issues such as funding, empowerment and person-centred care to social work and shows compassion and empathy for the needs of individuals.

Melissa's particular interest in Psychology stem from Attachment, Cognition and Development and Psychopathology. She has demonstrated a real interest in using a variety of media to support her studies and has been able to develop her interest outside of the classroom; demonstrating the basis of thorough research skills to use evidence to support more challenging arguments.

Laila has demonstrated competency in all aspects of the course work. She has developed working knowledge and skills across a range of techniques and processes, when answering a brief. Laila thrives working digitally and this is her strength. A higher-level course will provide the challenges needed to inspire Laila towards her goal of working in illustration.

Macy is focused this year on progressing to Higher Education, studying sport at level 3 has confirmed her desire to study sports development or physical education at university. She is an extremely motivated athlete who is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in her sport of netball; playing for club and representing college on numerous occasions. Macy applies herself to the practical elements of the course with enthusiasm and determination to improve her skills.

Adam has developed his cultural and critical understanding of art styles he is drawn to, especially comic book art and contemporary street artists. His recording skills are particularly strong within the realm of illustration and his mixed media work has been notably pleasing. He thinks 'outside the box' and is drawn to art styles that aren't so mainstream but which hold personal fascination for him.

Kai works hard in Computer Science, he thinks about the computer programming briefs with imagination, is experimental in his designs, and diligent in documenting solutions. Kai shows a competence for the subject through his willingness to learn from his peers and teachers; working hard to develop his knowledge which in turn has improved his approach to problem solving. Written work is well structured and the ideas are coherent and well developed.

Dara regularly used Art department facilities to produce extra coursework in his own time, he did a great deal of research and preparation at home developing his own folders of work in response to issue-based projects. This process involved critically evaluating the work of others, sourcing

data and developing a visual language sympathetic to his chosen issue. Dara is mild mannered with excellent empathy, showing reasoned consideration of others work and able to provide clear evidence-based responses when informally critiquing other student's work.

Shaheda is a kind and compassionate student, and her peers appreciate her open and sincere character. She is a natural carer and enjoys working with all ages demonstrated by role as a wellbeing prefect within the school. Shaheda has consolidated her learning by asking questions beyond the scope of the course and her teachers recommend her for a science-based career. She watches TEDx talks to extend her knowledge further and has taken time to read specialist reports regarding midwifery. Shaheda has been purposeful in developing her interest through her research on the taboos around breastfeeding, which she presented to our Y12 medics. Shaheda is very aware of the demanding nature of a healthcare course, and indeed a career in this field, and yet remains determined to pursue this pathway.

Sasha has worked cohesively during her research project and has proactively sought me out to discuss areas that she is struggling with. The drive to improve that she has shown means that she is now one of the most improved students on the course. She is passionate about doing well and will be the first to engage with feedback and complete redrafts when she is unhappy with her score.

David is a student who appears at home in a space that allows him to be creative and be alongside like-minded people. He is a visually inquisitive person whose wide points of reference are slowly coming together in a more coherent form in the creative work and design strategies across both his Art and Product Design. Recently he has responded to the constraints of deadlines, and he has demonstrated a willingness to accept and respond to advice on ways to document his work and communicate ideas effectively. The decision to adopt a digital sketchbook has been the catalyst to a period of sustained progress.

In Mathematics Thomas is a hardworking student who makes every effort to keep on top of the content and has the confidence to work well in small groups. He is also mature enough to take responsibility for his own learning, asking for clarification when required, and he will go out of his way to find extra support. Thomas shows he is able to present his work in a logical, step-by-step fashion and he is always meticulous in handing in an assignment by the deadline.

During her tenure, Louise was responsible for managing a large team and overseeing all aspects of clinical governance, infection control, staff mentoring, and training, as well as adherence to NHS Standard Operating Procedures and budget management. Despite the immense pressure on the service due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Louise worked tirelessly to ensure that the vaccination service ran smoothly and efficiently, often under very challenging circumstances. She consistently demonstrated excellent leadership and communication skills, and was able to motivate her team to deliver outstanding results. Her ability to work under pressure and remain focused on the task at hand was remarkable, and she can be trusted to complete any task assigned to her with minimal supervision.

Throughout the course, Cassie has balanced motherhood and studying, while ensuring that she undertakes all reading, showing a keen commitment to her studies. Cassie's own personal experience has clearly been what motivated her career change, but she has harnessed this experience by using it to develop a clear understanding of the role of a child nurse and the other healthcare professionals involved in neo-natal care. She has linked her own experiences to both policy and research and is able to reflect and draw on these experiences to evidence her academic discussion. Cassie has engaged in additional support

to enhance her analytical and academic writing skills to ensure she is in an excellent position for undergraduate study.

Muhammed completed his Access to HE Diploma online to provide him with the flexibility to fit his studies around his work and personal commitments. This requires a high degree of organisation and effective time management. Muhammed submitted his assignments in a timely manner and worked well with his tutors throughout the course. He is a conscientious student who applies himself fully to his studies, ensuring that he understands the requirements of each assignment prior to starting them. Whilst Muhammed found some subjects challenging, he demonstrated a strong commitment to his studies through the level of independent reading and research he carried out in order to improve his knowledge, understanding and grades. I believe that this demonstrates his dedication and determination to complete his Diploma successfully and progress to university.

Rose is the strongest of a large cohort and an outstanding Biologist. Her wider reading and passion for the subject underpins her vast subject knowledge and she was involved in the Biology Olympiad, achieving a Silver Award. An exceptional chemist, she is one of the most able in the cohort, consistently placed in the top 5% in assessments.

Practical skills within the sciences is of particular note, gaining high marks in her practical exam. Her practical skills also benefited her in her recent study of aspirin which she completed to a very high standard. She used her highly developed manipulative skills to synthesise aspirin and then successfully analysed her sample using thin layer chromatography and NMR spectroscopy.

Olivia is a gifted and talented national and GB level U18 national squad hockey player. During her studies she has spent significant time away from the classroom to engage with rigorous training. This has the potential to put pressure on her academic work, however, Olivia has never failed to make up for lost learning time.

Olivia's attitude, commitment, and drive to succeed is nurtured through her sport is also apparent in her studies. We hope that her future university will be supportive in enabling her to continue to balance her academic and sporting commitments; if they do, they will find the skills she brings back to the learning environment highly rewarding.

Pakrut participated in extra voluntary sessions for his maths A level to ensure he is on target and has become a mentor towards some of the younger students.

She was awarded the Service Prize, in recognition of his exceptional contribution to fundraising for various charity projects including his organisation of a school dance production for the orphanages in Mumbai.

Catrin achieved Head Girl and is a credit to the school for whom she represents often going above and beyond her duties, including running a charity event to support Ukrainian students

Catrin has won several school poetry competitions

Catrin was our only student within the last 5 years to get to the final of The Schools' Mace competition

Jasmine's refocus has opened new opportunities and her subject choice reflected her desire to pursue Business and Hospitality and we fully support her endeavour.

Strong-willed, tenacious attitude will ensure she succeeds in whatever she puts her mind to. Self-motivating, independent and varied interests have seen her win the Scouts regional cookery competition

Omar is considered one of our top students and recently ranked first out of 60 in Geography in our internal assessments. Our head of Geography rates Omar among the top three students he has taught in his 25-year career.

Omar's attitude to learning is second to none and has a position of responsibility which he takes on with dedication as Class Representative

Omar has indeed taken on work experience which she sourced herself and has received outstanding feedback from her time with XX

In Chemistry Amira achieved the highest aggregate grade in our Year 12 cohort of 75, with two A*s in her end of year exams. She is an outstanding historian, absorbing new concepts and skills with ease and ranking first in an able cohort of 170 students. She is also one of the strongest philosophers to study here in recent years, ranking first out of our cohort of 45 students, with an average mark of 89.7% and a mock exam score of 92%.

The very top of a large cohort, Harry is an outstanding Biologist. His intellectual curiosity is evidenced through his wider reading and passion for the subject, which underpins his vast subject knowledge. Grasping new concepts quickly, he makes links to previous learning and is able to express his ideas with clarity and detail, making accurate use of chemical terminology. He has recently taken part in the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge, receiving a Copper Award, and is currently enrolled online in an edX introductory course on Biochemistry.

Sam was awarded a full means-tested academic bursary on joining the School in Year 7, which he has retained throughout his seven years in the Senior School.

INDEPENDENT REFEREE EXAMPLES

Examples for Relationship to applicant

Provide an overview of your relationship with the applicant.

Section 1 - Overview of relationship to applicant.

I managed Priti while she served as the manager of the COVID-19 vaccination service across xx and I am pleased to recommend her as a highly capable and efficient manager.

I have known Emma since she was 13 and started to attend the youth project run by the xxx youth engagement project. Since then, Emma has volunteered at several of our projects, including an intergenerational community greenhouse project, and as a community ambassador. This project involved young people delivering positive activities that benefited the community. She headed up a project across all the infant and junior schools in the area, highlighting the impact of plastic on our oceans. She delivered a presentation that encouraged children to go out in the community and do litter picks, and with the litter, they collected all the schools made sculpture that were displayed around the community for everyone to enjoy. She also took the lead on a community podcast that tackled issues that young people face and interviewed actors, local politicians, other young people making a difference in their communities and lots more. Emma also became chair of community ambassadors and was integral to project as a youth voice champion.

I have known Akemi from XXXX to XXXX in my capacity as theatre anaesthetic and recovery lead and hospital resuscitation lead practitioner at the XX Royal Hospital. Akemi joined the Community Team for Learning Disabilities (CTLD) from January – May 20XX for her exposure to learning disabilities placement as part of her Trainee Nursing Associate training

I am the store manager of Next in XX and have held my position there for the last five years. I employed Kim and have known her in this professional setting for the last four years, and I must say it has been an absolute pleasure to have her as part of my team.

Examples for Extenuating Circumstances

Enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement.

Akemi has dyslexia and at first really struggled to communicate, however her confidence progressed well; always finding the way to convey the messages exchanged.

I cannot comment on her qualifications to date, but in my experience during her employment, Kim has held various roles having taken on additional responsibilities and proven her capability and adaptability in any given daily situation and have no doubt she is a suitable candidate for the course she is applying for.

I understand that Marly was raised in an environment where work and life skills were prioritised and was encouraged to gain full time employment at the earliest opportunity. While he did this admirably and has an impressive CV, it did mean that his attitude to education at the time he was at school doesn't reflect his current attitude. He has demonstrated at work that when he is committed to something he will pursue it to the very best of his ability, and I believe the same will be true at university.

Clem has commented frequently that although she has always had an interest in pursuing study in dance, this wasn't an available option at the school she attended, and a private dance school wasn't accessible either. She has had to work incredibly hard since leaving school to self-fund classes and training in order to gain the right foundation for further study.

Examples for other supportive information

Outline any supportive information specific to the applicant that you think universities/colleges should be aware of, or how they can support the applicant

Charlie has taken the decision to commit to further study and has successfully managed to balance family life, work life and additional responsibilities in his schedule and have no doubt about his ability and his commitment to the course

Ash has been a top asset for us during her work experience placement; her ability to balance the need for clear information with empathy and compassion when dealing with our clients has been outstanding. Responsibility to lead client sessions was delegated to Ash significantly faster than any other placement colleague we have had, exemplifying her capability and ability to inspire trust.

Jack was a very committed and conscientious student during their time with us, working hard to achieve their results. Since leaving, they have been undertaking voluntary work in Bali. In preparing for this they have greatly sharpened their organisational skills, and in discussing this application with them we have been impressed with how much more developed their understanding of marine conservation is, going well beyond anything covered within the school curriculum.